## Africa RISING Phase II Communities of Practice: Proposed CoPs and ToRs.

### Operationalising the CoPs

**Key actors and roles**

PCT members

* Establish and initiate CoPs
* Review CoP plans by champions
* Allocate resources to initial 5 CoPs, based on plans (IITA fund 2 CoPs; ILRI 2 CoPs, IFPRI 1 CoP)
* Review products and performance
* Actively participate as individuals in one or more CoPs

Comms team

* Ewen overall process support to the CoP champions and CoP members, mentoring and training/guidance to CoP champions. Guide overall set-up phase.
* Simret and Jonathan support assigned CoP champions, providing process and other assistance as needed. Particularly supporting community engagement and interaction.
* Support to face to face meetings (if necessary)

CoP champions

* Develop a plan (setting our scope and objectives), deliverables and budget for the CoP. Include virtual and face to face elements.
* Animate, encourage and facilitate CoP interactions, ensuring focus and result orientation as well as documentation and reporting.
* Manage assigned resources.
* Produce annual report on activities and results.

Chief scientists, scientists and others across the Program are welcome to participate in CoPs that interest them. SAG memebrs will ideally be associated to one main CoP, so their expertise can be incorporated into the CoPs.

**Key inputs to enable the CoPs to deliver**

* CoP champion, assistant champion and core of committed members, and strong endorsement from leadership that CoP contributions are valued and valuable.
* CoP activity plan with scope and deliverables; and associated budget
* Comms ‘platform’ for the CoP. Ideally online/virtual with possibility for some focused associated face to face activities (workshops, writeshops, exchange visits). The online platform should allow for regular and (easily) accessible communications as well as possibilities to hold ‘virtual conferences’ or exchanges on specific issues.
* CoP facilitation and engagement support to encourage and catalyse interaction, ensure documentation, and guide online conversations.

**CoP milestones**

1. Identify initial CoPs and their champions. DONE.
2. Agree funding mechanisms (from projects, for CoP activity plans). DONE.
3. Identify initial membership. DONE – at Dar meeting. Need to expand to people not attending (see below).
4. Set up wiki pages on the CoPs – as reference and guide for the CoPs and potential members. Action: Comms team.
5. Advertize the CoPs to all program scientists and solicit interest in joining CoPs. Could be a surveymonkey where people sign up. Action: Comms team.
6. Develop and deliver a light CoP facilitation ‘support pack’ for the CoP champions. Action: Comms team.
7. Establish mini-teams to set up each CoP – mixed membership of CoP Champion, assistant champion, assigned comms person, assigned PCT member/chief scientist. To drive activities. Action: PCT.
8. Commission CoP activity plans from CoP champions (with mini- team support). Action: PCT.
9. Set up comms platform/mechanism for each CoP – need to choose carefully. Action: Comms team.
10. Review CoP activity plans and agree budgets. Action: PCT.

### Proposed Communities of Practice

***Socio-economic Assessment of Technological Innovations*** (Proposed Champion: Asfaw Negassa, ILRI): We need a clearer idea of the economic feasibility of the technologies we think are scalable for different farmer typologies. Many of the technologies that have been analyzed in this respect have not necessarily taken all aspects into account or differentiated amongst various farm household situations. There is no clear consistency regarding the correct methodologies to use for economic analysis. Moreover there is a concern that cost benefit accounting alone is not adequate for participatory, demand-driven research that is trying to change and positively affect farmer’s behavior. This CoP should aim to identify and apply appropriate experimental and non-experimental scientific approaches that will allow us to identify economically viable options for increasing productivity, improving nutrition and reducing poverty in the real world.

***Nutrition*** (Proposed Champion: Caroline Sobgui, WorldVeg): All three projects have struggled to engage fully with quality research teams in this area. The activities that we have conducted have been handled in very different ways within each and, unlike gender for example, there has been little cross-fertilisation. A common approach to nutrition across the regions could allow us to build a critical mass of research in nutrition and be helpful in demonstrating that we are a true programme. It would also allow us to compare achievements towards improved nutrition. Nutrition will become more important to USAID with the new program that will replace Feed-the-Future.

***Private Sector Engagement for Better Linkages of Farmers to Input and Output Markets*** (Proposed Champion: Patrick Okori, ICRISAT): All projects have had very limited engagement with the private sector (PS) during Phase I. To some extent this is understandable because the PS wants validated and proven technologies and these were the major outputs of the first phase. However, we have them now and the risk is that we will not make best use of the opportunities that are out there because we do not know how to engage with the PS. Some strategic thinking and activities are needed otherwise we are unlikely to achieve much adoption of our technologies and markets for the anticipated surplus produce.

***Livestock intensification and integration*** (Proposed Champion: Augustine Ayantunde, ILRI): This is a bit like the case for a nutrition CoP. We do different things in different places based on interest and availability of researchers and partners (feed, health, housing, ruminants, pigs, poultry). Livestock are not only important for the integrating role that they play in farming systems but also for the contribution that livestock intensification makes to nutrition outcomes, income generation and poverty alleviation. They can also provide an entry point for improving gender equity. Moreover, and integrated approach to livestock across the projects was a key recommendation of the external review that was strongly picked up by the donor.

***Translating Research Outputs into Scaled Innovation*** (Proposed Champion: Haroon Sseguya, IITA): There are few projects that start from an open-ended systems diagnosis and get to the stage of promoting the scaling of tested, validated and adapted research outputs. Africa RISING is now moving beyond this stage to a situation where we can gather the evidence that these R-in-D approaches can really catalyse adoption and even generate impact at scale. This CoP should aim to identify promising approaches to scaling and promote them throughout the Africa RISING research teams. It should also ensure that the process is properly documented and analysed; to some extent this could overlap with the first CoP. Most importantly of all, this CoP will need to consider and synthesize the lessons that we will be learning on how and how not to take research outputs to scale.

***Discussion points Science Meeting – World Café – Dar Meeting – 17 Jan 2017***

🡪 Other themes: A number of additional topics were proposed that could be turned into COPs (e.g. environment, innovation platforms, climate issues, soil fertility management); it was explained that we would start with above 5 themes but (i) that (any AR colleague would be free to set up additional COPs (without direct support for facilitating these) and (ii) that such extra COPs could become a formal component of the Program at a later stage and after evaluation of initial progress made.

### Terms of Reference

These terms of reference should apply across all CoPs. One of the early tasks of the established CoPs will be to clarify their specific aims and deliverables based on the above outlines.

1. Establish a community of researchers with common aims and interests relating to the CoP mandate;
2. Formalize aims, deliverables and milestones to address the CoP mandate over the five year lifetime of Africa RISING’s second phase;
3. Maintain regular interactions amongst CoP members (including circulation of relevant materials, virtual and face-to-face meetings);
4. Promote best practices relating to the CoP topic across all Africa RISING projects and partner organizations for greater harmonization of approaches and methods;
5. Disseminate learning experiences and successes related to the CoP mandate to the wider research and development community;
6. Consider, as / if appropriate, mechanisms for maintaining the CoPs beyond AR-II for suitable exit strategies to ensure that their deliverables persist.

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🡪 Embedding COP outputs in Project planning: A recurring issue was the required processes to embed outputs from the COPs into Project-specific planning and implementation.

🡪 Goal: The goal of COPs could be related to knowledge sharing, learning, etc; important to note is the COPs do not have an implementing function with AR (implementation is done by the country/regional teams) but a scientific oversight role.

🡪 Focus in relation to goals and deliverables: COPs should in first instance identify short term and tangible deliverables that are critical to AR to ensure that results will be available in the shortest possible time; longer-term goals and deliverables could be added on.

### Implementation

CoPs should be free to determine their own processes (for ToR 3. above), but we might want to encourage a minimum of two relatively formal meetings per year (of which at least one in-person).

Each CoP will have a small budget for meetings and joint activities.

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🡪 Second facilitator: The need for a co-facilitator was expressed; COPs should be managed without vertical reporting lines and through facilitation.

🡪 Terms of engagement: It was proposed that subscribers to a COP should confirm a minimal level of commitment to make these work, though the level of engagement above such minimum could vary; multiple membership should be possible; members should include NARS partners and other AR partners directly engaged in implementing activities.

🡪 On-line forums: It would be important to have on-line forums for posting progress with the delivery of COP outputs; all AR colleagues should have access to all COP proceedings, independent of their respective membership.

🡪 Review: A process to review and evaluate progress with COP implementation should be set up, related to changes made to Project activities based on the integration of COP outputs.

🡪 Cross-cutting issues: How will the issue of cross-cutting expertise be handled? For instance, gender expertise could be relevant for all 5 COPs but there’s only 2 gender experts within the AR constituencies.

🡪 Facilitation: The COPs will need backstopping support from the AR communications team which has the expertise in-house to facilitate COPs.

🡪 Communication: The success of the COPs will depend on communication; cost-effective communication tools will be required to guide such processes (with support from the AR communication team).

🡪 Interactions between COPs: While there could be value in facilitating interactions between COPs, it was felt that in their initial phase, COPs should advance independently.